

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 02456 300903Z

10

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3232

INFO DIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUALA LUMPUR 2456

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MY

SUBJECT: INSURGENCY NOTES: MALAYSIAN HELICOPTER SHOT DOWN AND OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (A) KUALA LUMPUR 2287 (DTG 220517Z APR 76), (B) KUALA LUMPUR 2288 (DTG 220935Z APR 76), (C) KUALA LUMPUR 2345 (DTG 260045Z APR 76)

1. SUMMARY. ELEVEN SECURITY FORCE (SF) PERSONNEL KILLED IN CRASH OF LARGE HELICOPTER APPARENTLY DOWNED BY COMMUNIST TERRORIST FIRE DURING COUNTER-TERRORIST OPERATION ALONG THAI BORDER. RAIL LINE DAMAGED BY EXPLOSIVES APRIL 25 IN PERAK. SMALL CT BANDS CONTINUE TO ELUDE GOM NET AND HAVE SUCCEEDED IN OBTAINING SOME SUPPORT FROM LOCAL CHINESE ELEMENTS IN AREA OF WESTERN PAHANG
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PAGE 02 KUALA 02456 300903Z

STATE. END SUMMARY.

2. MALAYSIAN HELICOPTER SHOT DOWN. MALAYSIAN NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ANNOUNCED APRIL 27 THAT A ROYAL MALAYSIAN AIR FORCE (RMAF) SIKORSKY S-61 "NURI" HELICOPTER (SIMILAR TO "JOLLY GREEN GIANT" OF VIETNAM FAME) CRASHED AND BURNED NEAR GUBIR VILLAGE, IN THE ULU MUDA FOREST RESERVE, KEDAH, APRIL 26 WHILE PARTICIPATING IN A MAJOR OPERATION AGAINST COMMUNIST TERRORISTS (CT'S) CLOSE TO THAI BORDER (REPORTED REFTELS). ALL ELEVEN ABOARD WERE KILLED (EIGHT PASSENGERS AND THREE CREW MEMBERS). VICTIMS INCLUDED SEVEN OFFICERS (AN ARMY MAJOR, CAPTAIN AND LIEUTENANT, TWO RMAF CAPTAINS AND TWO RMAF LIEUTENANTS) AND FOUR OTHER RANKS (3 ARMY, 1 RMAF). ACCORDING TO NSC STATEMENT, HELICOPTER EN ROUTE TO MILITARY POSTS THAI/MALAYSIAN BORDER WAS BELIEVED TO HAVE COME UNDER CT FIRE AND CRASHED DURING EVASIVE MANEUVERS BY PILOT. ELABORATING ON THIS TO REPORTERS AT 6TH MALAYSIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS, SUNGAI PETANI, KEDAH, DEPUTY DEFENSE MINISTER MOKHTAR HASHIM SAID THAT THE HELICOPTER HAD BEEN DROPPING FOOD SUPPLIES TO SOLDIERS, AND APPARENTLY CRASHED TWO MINUTES AFTER BEING FIRED ON BY CT'S. HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER GHAZALI SHAFIE TOLD REPORTERS APRIL 28 OPERATION WILL CONTINUE.

3. COMMENT. LOSS OF US DOLLARS SIX MILLION HELICOPTER PLUS SEVEN OFFICERS AND FIVE OTHER RANKS MARKS NADIR OF WHAT APPEARS AT THIS POINT TO BE AN INORDINATELY CUMBERSOME OPERATION. WE HAVE HEARD PRIVATELY THAT ANOTHER HELICOPTER CAME UNDER FIRE APRIL 25, BUT NOT SERIOUSLY DAMAGED (REF A CITED SHOOTING UP OF A HELICOPTER APRIL 17 IN INITIAL PHASE OF OPERATIONS). EFFECTIVENESS OF COSTLY HIGH TECHNOLOGY/HARDWARE AND FIREPOWER APPROACH IN COUNTER-TERRORIST TACTICS IS QUESTIONED IN COMPARISON WITH MORE LABORIOUS, "GUTTING IT OUT" POLICE SPECIAL BRANCH-COORDINATED DEEP JUNGLE PATROLLING APPROACH THAT REAPED DIVIDENDS DURING 1948-1960 "EMERGENCY." IN FAIRNESS IT SHOULD BE NOTED HOWEVER THAT GOVERNMENT FORCES ARE FACING AN ELUSIVE ENEMY IN DIFFICULT TERRAIN WHO HAVE ACCESS TO RELATIVELY SECURE BASE AREAS ON THAI SIDE OF BORDER.

4. TRAIN MINING INCIDENT. WHAT LOCAL PRESS DESCRIBED AS
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PAGE 03 KUALA 02456 300903Z

"A SHORT STRETCH OF RAILWAY TRACT" ON MAIN LINE AT TEMOH BETWEEN KAMPAR AND TAPAH ROAD, SOUTH OF IPOH IN PERAK STATE WAS DAMAGED APRIL 25 BY EXPLOSIVE DEVICES PLANTED BY CT'S, BUT FORTUNATELY NO TRAIN WAS PASSING BY AT TIME. BOOBY TRAPPED RED FLAGS ALSO WERE FOUND AT THE SCENE BUT SUCCESSFULLY DISARMED. POLICE ATTRIBUTE INCIDENT TO CPM-M/L AND HAVE MOUNTED MAJOR SEARCH OPERATIONS IN VILLAGES IN VICINITY AND HAVE DETAINED A NUMBER OF SUSPECTS FOR

QUESTIONING.

5. COMMENT: COMMUNISTS FROM TIME TO TIME ATTEMPT TO MINE VULNERABLE STRETCHES OF RAILWAY TRACKS, OFTEN USING HOME-MADE EXPLOSIVE DEVICES. (REF C REPORTED ABORTIVE MINING OF RAIL LINE AT MENKTEKAB, NEAR TEMERLOH IN PAHANG STATE APRIL 22.) IT IS GENERALLY BELIEVED HOWEVER THAT UNDERGROUND SUPPORTERS OF THE CPM/CC AND PM-M/L, THE MALAYAN NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) AND MALAYAN PEOPLE'S LIBERATION LEAGUE (MPLL), RESPECTIVELY, RATHER THAN FULL TIME CT'S, ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR MANY OF THESE ATTEMPTS.

6. INSURGENT ACTIVITIES IN PAHANG. DURING ONE-DAY VISIT BY EMBOFF TO RAUB IN WESTERN PAHANG STATE APRIL 25, A NUMBER OF VILLAGES (PREDOMINANTLY ETHNIC CHINESE POPULATION) WERE POINTED OUT TO HIM AS ALLEGEDLY HAVING AIDED SCATTERED BANDS OF CT'S WHO ORIGINALLY INFILTRATED REGION IN 1973 AND HAVE BEEN THERE EVER SINCE. ALTHOUGH SUCCEEDING IN AVOIDING THE GOM NET AND ENLISTING SOME SUPPORT FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS, CT CORE GROUP (THOUGHT TO NUMBER ABOUT 20) IS KEPT CONSTANTLY ON MOVE BY GOM SECURITY FORCES. ONE GROUP IS BELIEVED NEAR KAMPUNG (VILLAGE) SUNGEI RUAN, EAST OF RAUB, AND PROJECTED VISIT THERE BY EMBOFF WAS CANCELLED BY HOSTS, APPARENTLY DUE TO ONGOING SECURITY OPERATIONS IN THAT VIICINITY. EMBOFF WAS SUPRISED TO LEARN THAT ETHNIC MALAYS, ALTHOUGH A PLURALITY, ARE OUTNUMBERED IN RAUB PARLIAMENTARY DISTRICT (POP. EST 70,000) BY COMBINED TOTALS OF CHINESE, INDIANS AND ORANG ASLI (ABORIGINES), LATTER ESTIMATED TO TOTAL APPROXIMATELY 1,000. LARGE NUMBER OF ETHNIC CHINESE IN AREA SIGNIFICANT SINCE CT'S OPERATING IN RAUB ENVIRONS ARE LARGELY IF NOT EXCLUSIVELY CHINESE AND HENCE ARE LESS CONSPICUOUS IN THIS MILIEU, WHICH ALSO PROVIDES THEM SCOPE FOR RECRUITMENT AND SUPPLIES.

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PAGE 04 KUALA 02456 300903Z

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